

NEWS FROM THE DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONTROL

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Plan Now for Winter Coastal Storms and Flooding

Delaware's hurricane season may have ended Nov. 30, but the threat of coastal storms and flooding is a year round issue. Each winter our region is hit with "northeasters," storms that produce heavy rain and snow, along with wind-driven waves that batter the coast and can cause severe flooding and beach erosion. Northeasters can form anytime from October through April; however, they are most common during the winter months.

"This fall's storms impacted the dunes and beaches in Kent and Sussex counties making properties along the coast vulnerable to flooding," said Michael Powell, environmental scientist with DNREC's Shoreline and Waterway Management Section. "Scientists with the National Weather Service predict the 2006-2007 El Nino season will produce more coastal storms than in previous winters, so we encourage homeowners to plan ahead to protect property from flood damage."

Many homes and communities in Delaware are built in floodplains. According to Greg Williams, DNREC environmental scientist, Delaware properties located within a special flood hazard area have a 26 percent chance of experiencing a 100-year flood during the life of a 30-year mortgage. "Properties located in a special flood hazard area are most at risk and should be protected by flood insurance," said Williams. "Delaware property owners can determine their flood risk by viewing the flood maps on DNREC's Environmental Navigator."

Delaware property owners should prepare now for the threat of coastal storms and flooding:

- Determine your risk for flooding. View your property on DNREC's Environmental Navigator or contact your insurance agent.
- Purchase a flood insurance policy, if you do not have one. There is typically a 30-day waiting period before flood insurance will take effect.
- Review your current insurance policy and become familiar with what is covered and what is not covered.
- Make a flood plan and plan an evacuation route. Keep important papers in a safe, waterproof place.
- Itemize and take pictures of your possessions.
- Visit www.FloodSmart.gov/winter to find the most up-to-date information.

To view a Delaware property and its risk for flooding, visit DNREC's Environmental Navigator, www.dnrec.delaware.gov Click on "Environmental Navigator" under SERVICES on the left hand side of the site's home page. To view area flood maps, visit the Federal Emergency Management Association's site at www.FEMA.gov/hazard/flood

For questions regarding DNREC's Environmental Navigator or for more information, contact Greg Williams, Division of Soil and Water Conservation, 302-739-9921 or Gregory.Williams@state.de.us

Scientists and educators with DNREC's Division of Soil and Water Conservation provide training on the risks of flooding and help communities remain compliant with FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program requirements. After extensive flooding in Seaford in August 2006, scientists presented a seminar on flood insurance policies to Sussex County insurance agents. Upcoming training is scheduled for February 2007 for community officials throughout the state.

The Division of Soil and Water Conservation's Shoreline and Waterway Management Section monitors coastal areas during storms to assess beach erosion, dune damage, and flood threats. In coordination with the Delaware Emergency Management Agency and DelDOT, these threats are evaluated to determine areas of probable road flooding and dune breakthroughs. Every attempt is made to predict problem areas before damaging floods or dune breakthroughs occur. The section provides technical assistance to local governments and property owners to help them recover from storms.